

remedy only behind closed doors of private arbitration, with no other alternative.

This is wrong; it is unfair; and it is about time it changed. And that is exactly what we will accomplish through this bipartisan legislation. It will not only ensure that those who have suffered sexual harassment or assault have the option to go to court if they choose, it will also be retroactive. People locked into these clauses right now will benefit just as much as new employees will in the future. That is an important point that hasn't gotten enough attention. It will undo the pernicious effect of these clauses that already exist.

I want to thank my friend and fellow New Yorker, Senator GILLIBRAND, for spending years advocating for this legislation. This accomplishment wouldn't be possible without her leadership and her commitment to working with the other side.

Likewise, I want to thank Senator GRAHAM and Senator ERNST for reaching across the aisle and working with us to get this bill done.

Yesterday, Senators GRAHAM and ERNST met in my office, and we came to an agreement to move this forward. And we very much appreciate that. It was truly a collaborative effort by the Senate, and thanks to everyone's work, forced arbitration for sexual assault and harassment will soon be a thing of the past.

As I said in my very first speech as majority leader, Democrats will always be open to working with Members of the other side of the aisle when the opportunity arises. The differences between the parties are real and cannot be ignored, but we can neither ignore the genuine chances for progress when both parties agree to move forward on certain topics.

Last year, it was precisely this majority's commitment to bipartisan cooperation that cleared the path for historic hate crimes legislation. Together, we also passed a historic jobs and supply chain bill, which we hope is enacted soon.

And together, Democrats and Republicans secured the first stand-alone infrastructure package in years.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, this week has been a continuation of that commitment to working with the other side when possible. The legislation on forced arbitration is a prime example. And yesterday we saw another example: Appropriators from both parties announced that they reached a framework agreement for a yearlong appropriations package.

This is a huge step forward for arriving at an omnibus, and it is great news for our goal of avoiding a yearlong CR, which would have been painful and costly.

There is a lot of work left to do before we pass a government spending

bill, but yesterday's announcement shows appropriators are now on a very good path.

We are driving forward toward an omnibus, and I am very, very hopeful and optimistic that we will get there.

In the meantime, the Senate will do the responsible thing by passing a temporary CR next week in order to give the appropriators enough time to put their funding packages together.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday, our colleagues from both sides of the aisle came together to announce an agreement on reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act, which was last acted on nearly a decade ago by this Chamber.

I want to commend my colleagues Senators FEINSTEIN and DURBIN, as well as Senators ERNST and MURKOWSKI, for all the work they have done to bring us closer to reauthorizing VAWA.

I also want to thank my colleagues who are cosponsoring this legislation. And I have a particular interest because when I was in the House, I helped carry the original VAWA legislation that became law and has now lapsed.

Most importantly, I want to thank every single person who participated in yesterday's press conference who shared their own experiences of abuse.

The Violence Against Women Act is one of the most important laws passed by Congress in the last 30 years, and it is my hope that the Senate can take action on this bill in the near future.

There are nine Republicans cosponsoring this legislation so we need one more, at least, in order to clear a path forward.

If we can find more support for VAWA, I would expect that the Senate will seek to take action.

VAWA must be reauthorized. We cannot allow inaction to persist for a moment longer, and with yesterday's bipartisan announcement, we are closer than ever to achieving that goal.

POSTAL REFORM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on postal, there is one more sign of progress this week that I want to mention, another bipartisan effort like VAWA and like all of the other bills I have mentioned—arbitration and the CR—and this is the bipartisan efforts by both Chambers to pass the most significant postal reform bill in decades.

Later today—soon—I will file cloture on the postal reform bill approved overwhelmingly by the House earlier this week. For the information of all Senators, this will set up the first vote this coming Monday evening.

Postal reform has been decades in the making and is one of the best steps we can take to strengthen one of our country's most important institutions. Tens of millions of Americans depend on the post office every day. Seniors and veterans need it for things like

medication. Businesses need it to function. Rural communities need it to stay connected. Countless people rely on the post office to connect with each other for things like birthdays, travel, the holidays, or any one of life's many, many special occasions.

By passing postal reform, we can ensure that Americans will continue to rely on a speedy, dependable, and well-run post office. We have all heard complaints about how the mail delivery has slowed down. This is a strong, important effort to rectify that bad problem. It will be a win for everyday Americans and for the dedicated men and women who work to deliver our mail every single day.

CANNABIS LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on cannabis legislation. All of these issues I have mentioned—forced arbitration reform, appropriations, VAWA, and postal reform—have been bipartisan efforts. They reflect a commitment that Democrats made at the start of the year to work with the other side when the opportunities presented themselves, and I thank my Republican colleagues for working with us. Before I close, there is one more appeal I want to make for bipartisan cooperation, and that is on cannabis reform.

This morning, I joined with Senators BOOKER and WYDEN in sending a "Dear Colleague," inviting Members from both sides of the aisle to join in an effort to draft and finalize comprehensive cannabis reform. Last summer, I joined with Senators BOOKER and WYDEN in introducing our framework legislation for Federal reform of cannabis, and we want to build on this framework as we prepare to introduce legislation in the near future.

Today, millions—hundreds of millions of Americans live in States, both blue and red, where cannabis has been legalized in some way. It is long past time for the Federal Government to catch up.

This is about individual freedom and about basic fairness. For decades, Federal cannabis laws have caused immense damage to millions of Americans, particularly Black and Hispanic people, who have been unfairly targeted by these laws. We need to change that. We need to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses to legitimately pursue new opportunities, and comprehensive Federal cannabis legislation is critical—critical—to reaching that goal.

I want to thank Senators BOOKER and WYDEN and all my colleagues who have worked with us on this important and long-overdue change. I hope we can make more progress on cannabis reform in the near future.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022—Motion to Proceed

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 266, H.R. 3076.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to H.R. 3076, a bill to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 266, H.R. 3076, a bill to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

Charles E. Schumer, Gary C. Peters, Jacky Rosen, Amy Klobuchar, Tammy Duckworth, Patrick J. Leahy, Tina Smith, Tammy Baldwin, Jeff Merkley, Sheldon Whitehouse, Christopher A. Coons, Brian Schatz, Jon Tester, Jon Ossoff, Benjamin L. Cardin, Martin Heinrich, Jack Reed, Alex Padilla.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 668.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert McKinnon Califf, of North Carolina, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 668, Robert

McKinnon Califf, of North Carolina, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

Charles E. Schumer, Patty Murray, Richard Blumenthal, Gary C. Peters, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Sheldon Whitehouse, Martin Heinrich, Richard J. Durbin, Sherrod Brown, Tammy Duckworth, Tim Kaine, Mazie Hirono, Alex Padilla, Tina Smith, Christopher A. Coons, Amy Klobuchar, Jon Tester.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, Thursday, February 10, be waived.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3623

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3623) to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I will object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

ENDING FORCED ARBITRATION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACT OF 2021

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to consideration of H.R. 4445, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4445) to amend title 9 of the United States Code with respect to arbitration of disputes involving sexual assault and sexual harassment.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

INFLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, moments ago, the country got yet another terrible monthly inflation report under the Biden administration. Yet again, the data confirmed what working families already know painfully

well: Rampant inflation and soaring prices are crushing—crushing—the American people.

Experts had predicted another red-hot inflation report, around 7 percent. Even that alone would have meant we were still trapped inside the worst inflation in 40 years, but reality turned out to be even worse than that. It turns out inflation this past year hasn't been 7 percent; it has been 7½ percent. In other words, if you haven't personally gotten a pay raise of 8 percent or more in the last year, then Democrats' policies have given you a pay cut—pay cut.

To add insult to injury, reporters say the worst of this inflation was driven by the most painful categories for working families: food prices, energy prices, and rent.

This is not about financial inconvenience for wealthy people who can afford to stomach it; this is about massive price increases for essential goods that make up a huge share of working families' budgets. Gas is up about 40 percent since this time last year. Used car prices are up about the same. Meat, fish, and eggs cost over 12 percent more than they did just 1 year ago. The cost of natural gas for home heating has soared by 24 percent since this time last year. Fuel oil has shot up almost 47 percent. The cost of essentials has absolutely exploded since Washington Democrats took power.

To be clear, the worst inflation in 40 years is not something that just spontaneously happened to Democrats on their watch. As a Pew report demonstrated late last year, it is true that countries around the world are facing inflation—they are—as a result of COVID, but America has it worse than almost everybody else in the developed world. This is a direct result of liberal policy choices.

Here is how Jason Furman, President Obama's CEA Chairman, explained it recently. I will quote from the New York Times:

"The United States has had much more inflation than almost any other advanced economy in the world," said Jason Furman, an economist at Harvard University and former Obama administration economic adviser, who used comparable methodologies to look across areas and concluded that U.S. price increases have been consistently faster. The difference, he said, comes because "the United States' stimulus is in a category of its own."

Obviously, he is referring to the \$2 trillion so-called rescue package last year.

The severity of this inflation was directly fueled by the reckless, far-left spending spree that every single Democrat in this Chamber voted to ram through at President Biden's behest last year.

Even the most prominent liberal economists knew this would happen and tried to warn the Democrats. A year ago, Larry Summers warned that Democrats' binge could set off "inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation." Ah, but Democrats ignored their own experts. They